

2009

Alaska Motorcycle Safety Advisory Committee



Motorcycle Enthusiast Survey Results and Analysis



AMSAC Board Members: Vice-Chair Dan McCrummen, Craig Breshears, Chair Dan Coffey, DOT&PF Commissioner Leo von Scheben, Barry Matteson, Boyd McFail, Chris Rogers. Photo by Rick Feller, Alaska DOT&PF.



Cover Photo *Motorcycle riders on the Sterling Highway* by Tucker Hurn, Alaska DOT&PF.

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Background

The Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) established the Alaska Motorcycle Safety Advisory Committee (AMSAC) as a means to use knowledgeable and experienced individuals in the issues of motorcycle safety and roadway operations, to advise the department on rider education and training, impaired motorcycle driver enforcement, motorist awareness of motorcycles, road hazards unique to motorcycles, and other matters relating to motorcycle safety. In general, the AMSAC is a review body that provides the DOT&PF with motorcycle highway safety-related recommendations. Further information about AMSAC and motorcycle safety can be found on the State of Alaska, Highway Safety Office web site (www.dot.alaska.gov/ahso). Follow the link on the right to Motorcycle Safety.

On Saturday March 21, and Sunday March 22, 2009, AMSAC distributed paper surveys to 218 random participants at the Alaska Motorcycle Dealers Association (AMCDA) 16th Annual Custom Cycle Show in Anchorage, Alaska. The survey respondents were eligible for a chance to win \$200.00 towards the purchase of motorcycle riding safety gear, by completing and turning in the survey. The results in this document reflect the compilation of answers given on the paper surveys.

The analysis of the data collected from the paper surveys was accomplished by the Alaska Highway Safety Office, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.



Alaska DOT&PF Commissioner Leo von Scheben at the 2009 Alaska Motorcycle Dealer Association's Annual Bike Show. Photo by Rick Feller, Alaska DOT&PF.

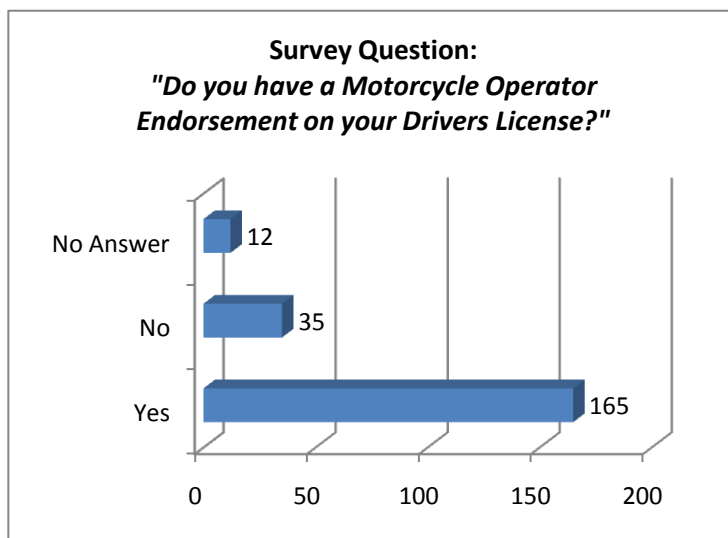
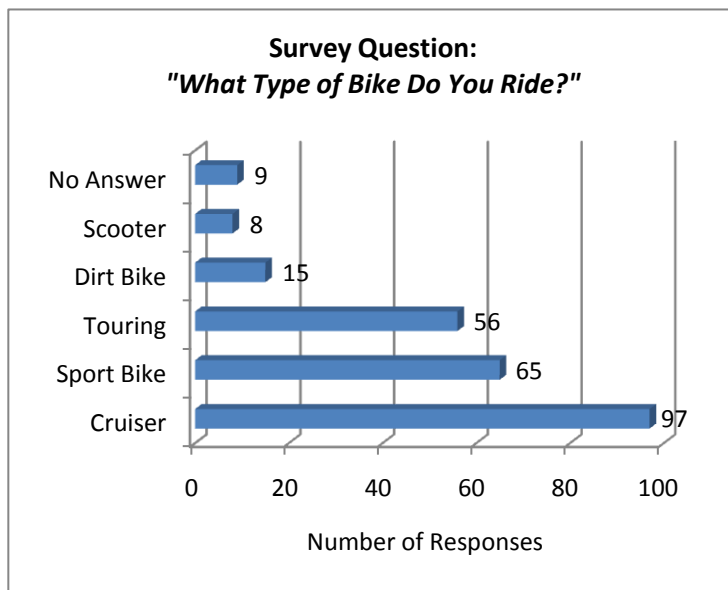
General Analysis

Out of 218 survey respondents, 190 replied yes to operating a motorcycle; 22 replied they ride on motorcycles as passengers only; and 6 replied no to either operating or riding on a motorcycle. The rest of the data analysis in this document includes only those 212 respondents replying “yes” to either operating or riding on a motorcycle.

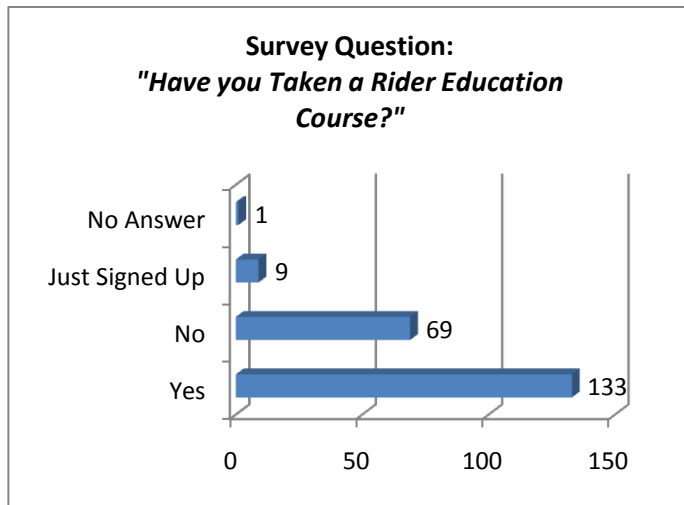
The type of motorcycle most frequently operated by the survey respondents is the “Cruiser”, which received 40% favor, while the nearest contender, the “Sport Bike”, received 27% favor. There were 9 respondents who did not answer this question, and 33 respondents who indicated multiple types of motorcycles.

In Alaska, drivers must have a valid Motorcycle Operator Endorsement on his/her driver’s license to lawfully operate a motorcycle. Operators must pass a series of tests, and/or take a motorcycle safety course. More information on how to obtain an Alaska Motorcycle Operator license can be found on the State of Alaska, Division of Motor Vehicles web site (<http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/ADMIN/dmv/akol/motor.htm>)

To the question “Do you have a Motorcycle Operator Endorsement on your Driver License”, 78% of respondents answered “yes”, while 17% answered “no”. Six percent of respondents did not answer the question. To the question “Is Your Endorsement/License from Alaska”, 95% (157) of respondents answered “yes”, 3% (5) answered “no”, and 2% (3) did not respond.



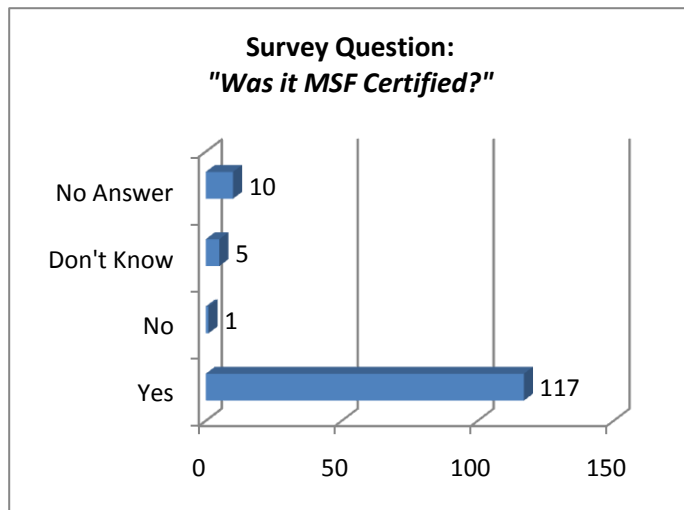
The five respondents answering “no” also listed the state from which they received their motorcycle endorsement/license. These states were as follows: California, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, and New Jersey.



Rider Education Courses

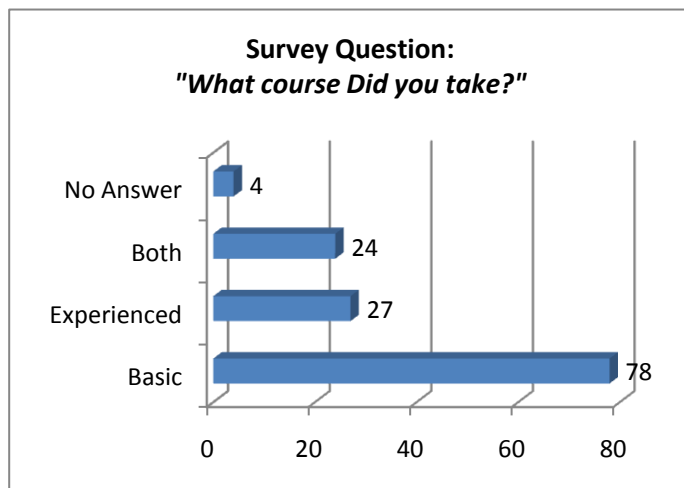
The Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) offers several courses in Alaska, to provide operators with skills needed to stay safe on the road. To obtain more information about these courses, or the organization itself, visit the MSF's web site (<http://www.msf-usa.org/>).

Over half (63%) of the respondents replied they had taken a rider education course, and of these, a strong majority (88%) replied that the course was MSF certified.



To simplify the types of courses into two fields, respondents were asked whether they joined a basic course, an experienced course, or both. Over half (59%) replied they enrolled in a basic education course, while those who attended an experienced education course were nearly equal to those who joined both types of courses (20% and 18% respectively).

The majority of respondents indicating they attended a rider education course also replied they took the course in Alaska (86%, or 113). The 14% (18) who took the course elsewhere listed the following states. Three respondents did not list a state.



State	Respondents
Arizona	1
California	1
Colorado	2
Georgia	1
Hawaii	1
Mississippi	1
North Carolina	2
Nebraska	1
New Jersey	1
New Mexico	1
Nevada	1
Oregon	1
Utah	1

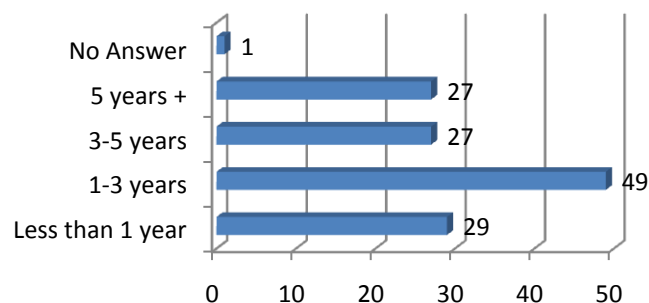
More than half of the respondents took their course within the last three years (59%), compared to those who had taken a class over three years ago (41%).

For the Love of the Ride

Out of the 212 total respondents, 194 indicated the estimated number of years they have been riding motorcycles, for a combined total of 3,964 years. The average number of years per respondent was 20, with a range varying from less than a year to well over 60. Eighteen respondents did not answer this question.

To the question, *“How many estimated road miles did you ride in 2008”*, 184 respondents answered for a combined total of 717,008 road miles. The average estimated road miles driven by each respondent was 3,897. Considering Baltimore, MD on the East coast to San Francisco, CA on the West coast of the Lower 48 is only 2,815 miles, these respondents truly hit the road in 2008. Twenty-two respondents gave an estimated total of over 10,000 road miles each, with the highest respondent reporting an estimated 20,000 road miles. Sixteen respondents reported they did not drive any road miles in 2008, and 28 reported an estimated 500 or less each. Twenty-eight did not respond to this question.

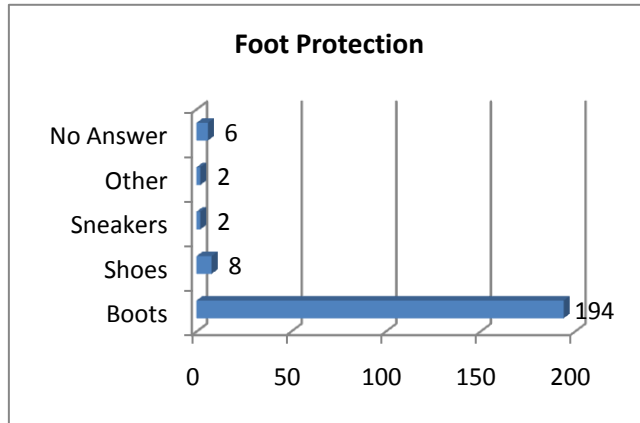
Survey Question: *“How long has it been since you took your last course?”*



A heart-shaped pothole on Seward Highway, Turnagin Arm. Photo by Michael Gerharz, Alaska DOT&PF.

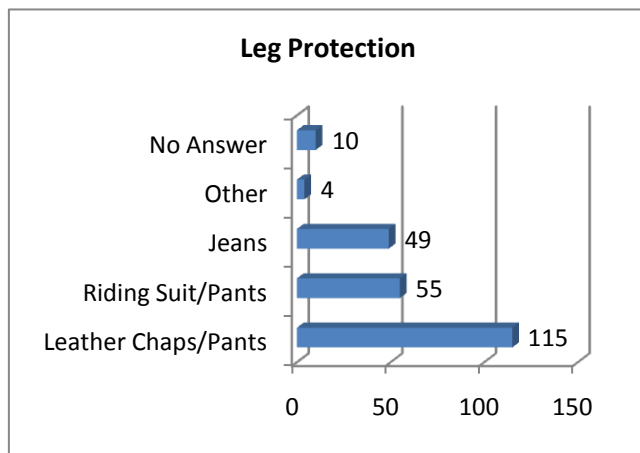
Protective Gear

Respondents were asked what type of protective gear they typically wear when riding. Some respondents answered multiple types of protective gear in each category; therefore some of the following figures may seem distorted. The fact that most respondents replied they wear some sort of protective gear while riding is a positive indication of personal responsibility for safety, which is reflected in the data.



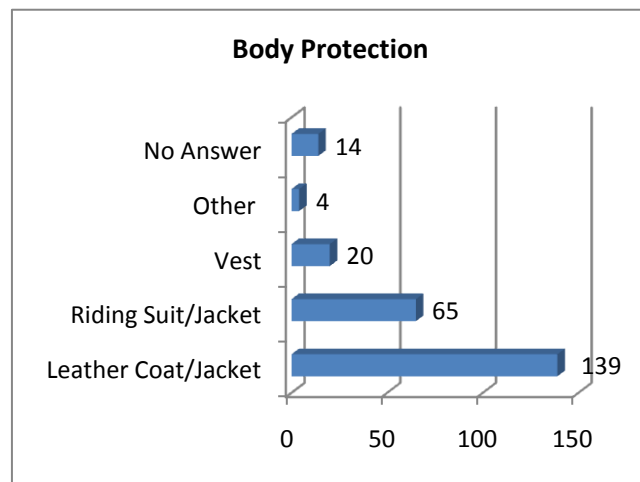
Foot Protection

The majority of respondents (92%) replied they wear “boots” while riding. The second preferred foot protection is “Shoes” which trails behind at only 4% favor.



Leg Protection

Almost half of respondents (49%) replied they wear “Leather Chaps/Pants” while riding. The second and third preferred choices of leg protection are nearly equal with 24% favor for “Riding Suit/Pants”, and 21% favor for “Jeans”.



Body Protection

More than half of respondents (57%) replied they wear a “Leather Coat/Jacket” while riding. Following behind in second place is “Riding Suit/Jacket” with 27% favor.

Hand Protection

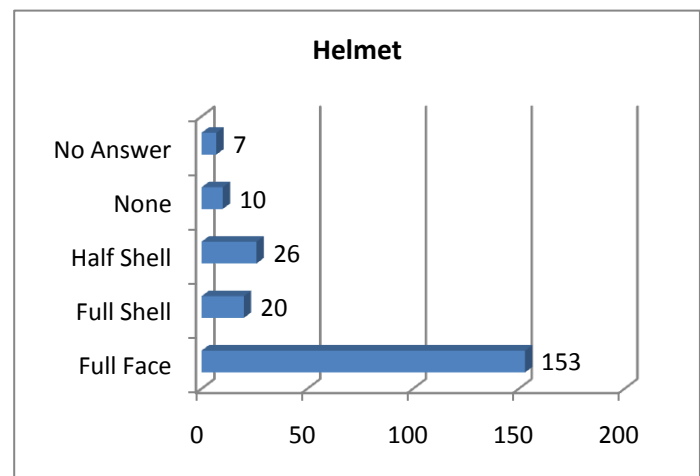
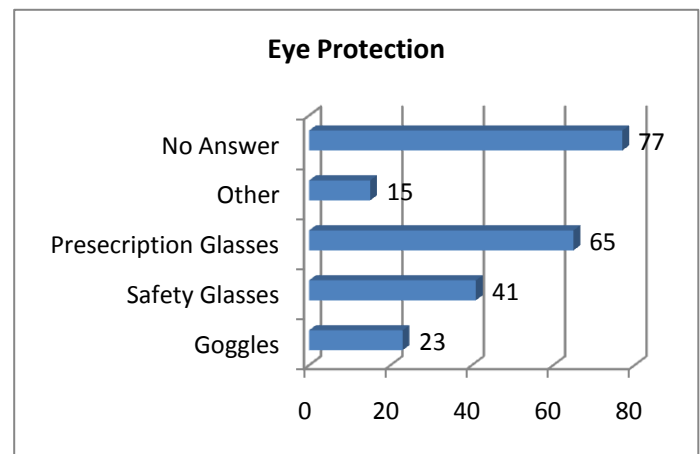
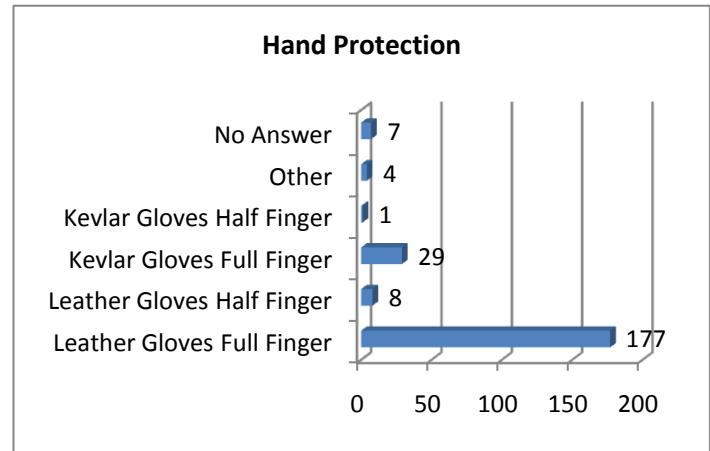
More than three quarters of respondents (78%) replied they wear “Leather Gloves Full Finger”, and 13% replied they wear “Kevlar Gloves Full Finger” while riding.

Eye Protection

About 29% of respondents replied they wear “Prescription Glasses” while riding. However, many respondents (35%) did not answer, leaving the impression there might be an issue with this question or the available answers.

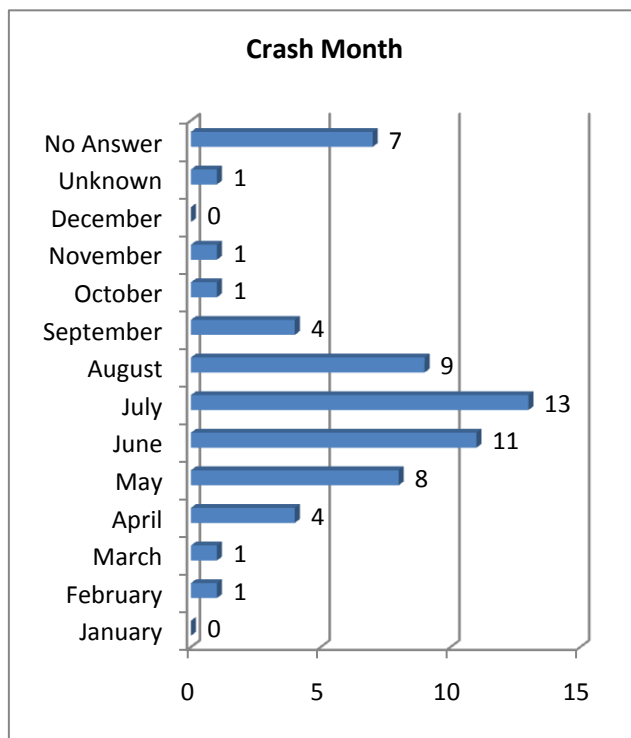
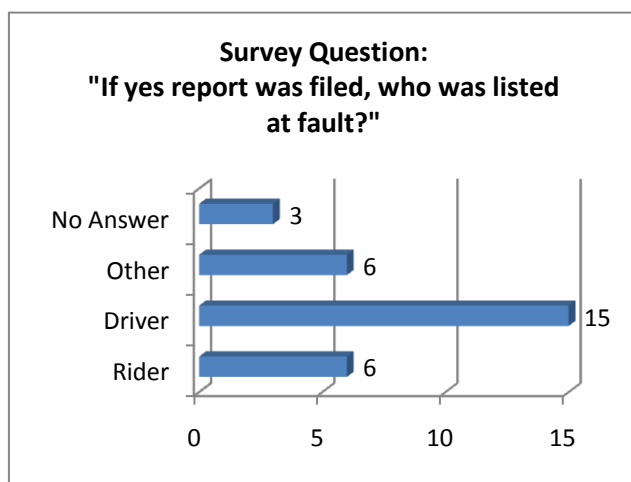
Helmet Use

Almost three quarters (71%) of respondents replied they wear a “Full Face” helmet while they ride. Incidentally, 70 out of the 77 respondents who did not answer which type of eye protection they use *did* reply that they use a “Full Face” helmet while riding. This would suggest that these respondents do in fact use a type of eye protection which was not listed as an option on the survey.



Motorcycle Crashes

One of the most serious events that can happen to a motorcycle rider is a crash. Data collection and analysis of motorcycle crashes can assist in educating officials and the public about the causes and outcomes of these severe events. In 2008, eight motorcyclists lost their lives on Alaska's roads. By learning the circumstances around these and other motorcycle crashes, they will assist in paving the way toward prevention and safety for others.



Crash Participants

Sixty-one respondents replied they had been in a motorcycle crash. Of these, 62% (38) involved another vehicle in the crash. At the time of the crash, 57 respondents replied they were the motorcycle operator, 3 were motorcycle passengers, and 1 was a driver or passenger in the other vehicle.

In just under half of the crashes (49%, or 30), a police report was filed, while a close 48% (29) did not involve the police. Two respondents did not answer this question.

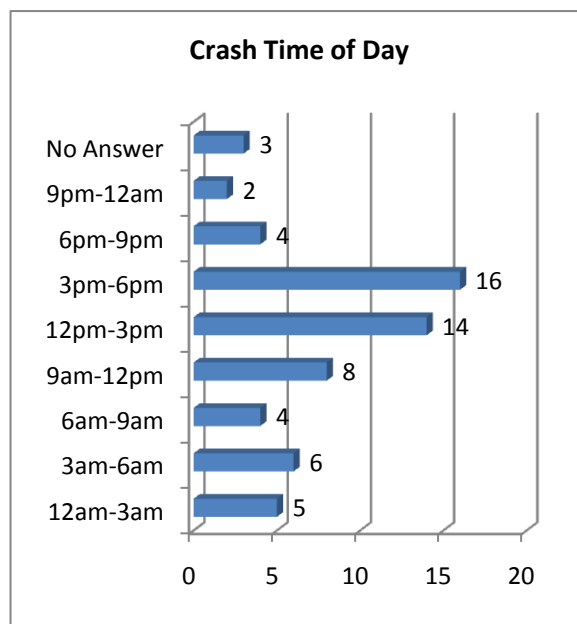
Out of the 30 crashes involving the police, exactly half (15) listed the Driver of the other vehicle as the "At fault" party on the police report.

While fortunately no respondents reported fatalities, 41 respondents did report injuries, and 14 reported no injuries. Six respondents did not answer the question. Thirty-six of these injuries were to motorcycle operators, and eight were to motorcycle passengers. One respondent did not answer, and three provided multiple answers. Of the 41 injuries, 13 were serious enough to require a stay of more than one day in the hospital, while 19 did not. Nine respondents did not answer this question.

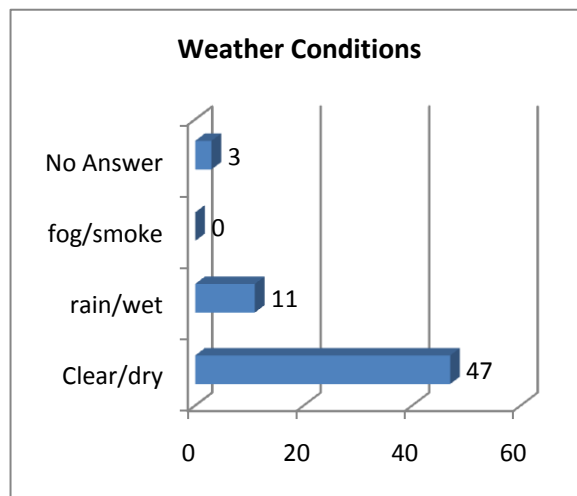
Crash Circumstances

The summer months, May through August, had the most number of crashes. This is not surprising given Alaska's often harsh winters which are inhospitable to motorcycle riding.

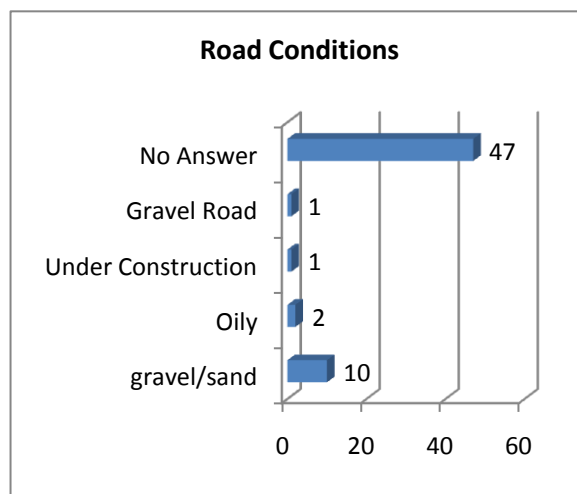
Late afternoon was the most frequent time of day reported (26%), with early afternoon a close second (23%). These times are consistent with lunch and afternoon rush hour traffic, which could account for the volume of crashes.

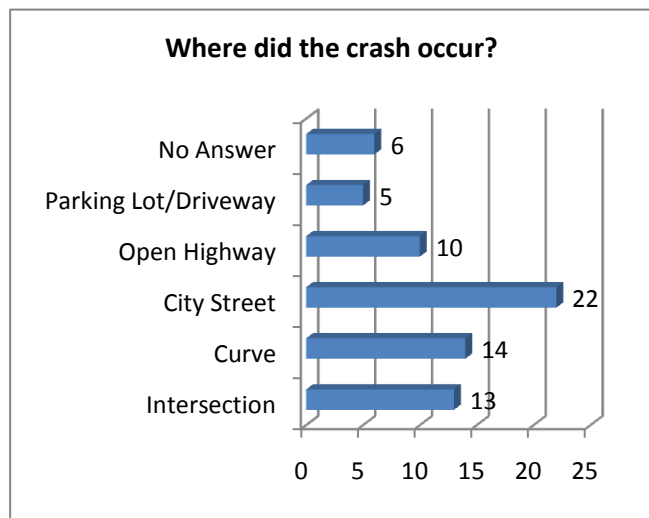


The weather conditions reported were 77% clear/dry. This is not surprising, as clear and dry conditions are ideal for riding motorcycles, and therefore may account for an increase in riders on the road. Vehicle operators may also be less attentive during clear and dry conditions, and therefore more likely to be involved in crashes.

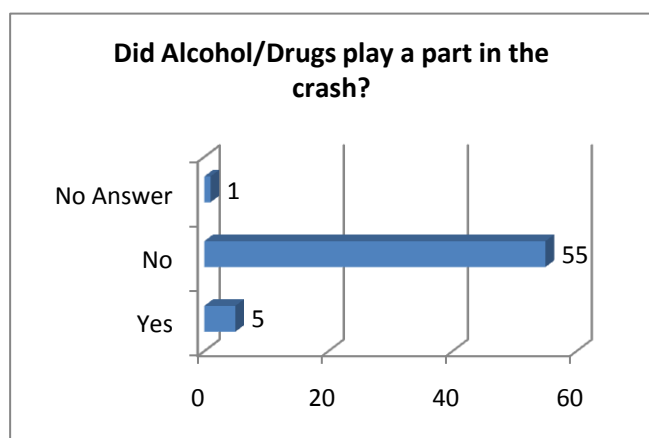


The overwhelming response to the crash road conditions was actually no response at all, with 77%. This suggests a flaw in the question or the available answers.

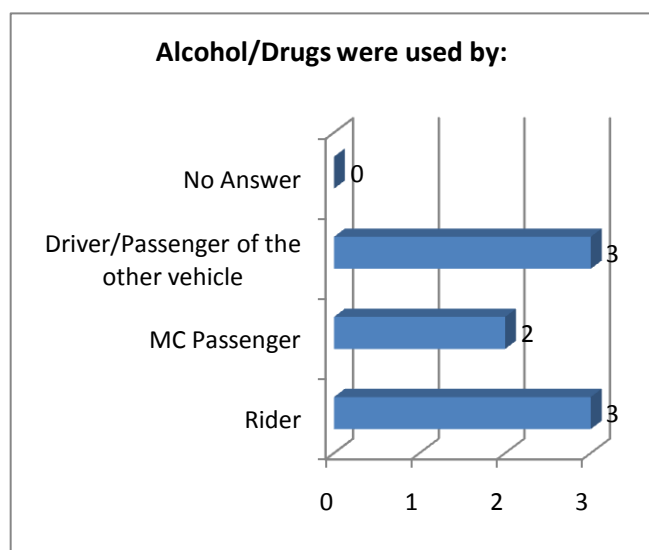




Most respondents reported crashes occurring on city streets (31%), with curves as a second location (20%).



When asked if alcohol and/or drugs played a part in the crash, 90% of respondents replied “no”.



Of the respondents who replied “yes”, three replied that the Driver/Passenger of the other vehicle used alcohol/drugs, and three replied the motorcycle rider used alcohol/drugs.

What does this mean?

The average survey respondent is the operator of a motorcycle. This person rides either a cruiser or a sport bike; and he or she has a motorcycle endorsement on their Alaska driver's license. This person has taken an MSF certified basic rider education course in Alaska, within the last three years. This person has been riding motorcycles for about 20 years, and in 2008 they drove about 3,897 road miles.

When riding, this person typically wears boots to protect the feet, leather chaps or pants to protect the legs, and a leather coat or jacket to protect the body. This person wears full finger leather gloves on the hands. For eye protection, he or she possibly wears prescription glasses, but more likely relies on the full face helmet which also protects the head.

Fortunately this person has probably not been in a motorcycle crash. However, if he or she has, it would have involved another vehicle. This person would have been the motorcycle operator in the crash. There is a near 50/50 chance that the police were involved, and a crash report was filed. If a report was filed, the driver of the other vehicle was listed at fault. This person, as the operator of the motorcycle, would have sustained injuries that may have required a stay of more than one day in the hospital.

The crash would have likely been in July, though it could have happened in any of the summer months. The crash occurred on the afternoon of a clear and dry day on a city street. No alcohol or drugs were involved by any party in the crash.

Future Surveys

To obtain even more refined results, future surveys may need to include more answer choices to the questions. For instance, under eye protection, listing more choices such as "none" or "helmet with eye protection" could reduce some of the non-answers. Perhaps including more choices under road conditions such as "paved", "other", and "snow/ice" could also help with alleviating the non-answers.

It could also be helpful to ask the respondent's age and gender to further determine the characteristics of the average survey respondent.

The Alaska Highway Safety Office is within the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

This Report was written and produced by Joanna S. Reed, under the supervision of Cindy Cashen. Kathy Budke and Bob Friend provided edit checks.

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